

Popularity of Methamphetamine

- **Initially used primarily by Caucasian male blue-collar workers and quickly spread to the “party and club scenes” and to the gay communities.**
- **Use is increasing among Hispanics, the young homeless population, long-haul truck drivers, as well as among people in the entertainment, sales, retail, and legal professions.**
- **Both men and women now use methamphetamine in equal numbers.**
- **More women use methamphetamine than use cocaine or heroin.**
- **Community groups are now reporting increasing use by adolescents in the northern part of Rhode Island, and by college students in this state.**
- **The number of people dependent on methamphetamine more than doubled between 2002 and 2004.**
- **The 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) estimated that 12 million people ages 12 and older had tried methamphetamine at least once.**

Why All the Fuss?

- **“Meth” is not just “meth”. Up to 60% of what a person smokes, snorts or injects is *not* methamphetamine. It is cut with other substances to maximize profits, and is full of impurities such as lead acetate or mercury which can cause heavy metal poisoning.**
- **People who use methamphetamine develop a tolerance for its effects, meaning that it takes a higher dose to get the desired effect; the higher the dose, the more toxic the effects.**
- **Methamphetamine can cause serious long-term physical and psychological damage, and often results in long-term craving for the drug if use is discontinued.**
- **Although some toxic effects go away in time, some can become permanent even after a person stops using the drug.**
- **Fetuses of mothers who use methamphetamine are at risk of having a stroke or brain hemorrhage often resulting in death before delivery. Babies born to**

mothers who have used methamphetamine during pregnancy often have abnormal reflexes, irritability, and difficulty digesting food.

How Can I Tell if Someone is Using Methamphetamine?

- Immediate physical effects include increased heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, temperature, pupil size, sensitivity to sound and stimulation, and decreased appetite, reaction time, and sleep.
- Chronic physical effects include seizures, involuntary tremors and movements, damage to small blood vessels in the brain leading to stroke, damaged brain cells, kidney and liver failure, irregular heartbeat causing death, as well as severe problems with gums and teeth, often known as “meth mouth”, and high risk sexual behavior leading to increased risk for Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS.
- Immediate psychological effects include euphoria, alertness or wakefulness, feelings of increased strength, energy, and invulnerability as well as feelings of increased confidence and competence.
- Chronic psychological effects include confusion, loss of ability to concentrate and organize information, mood swings, paranoia, sudden rages leading to violence, depression leading to suicidal thoughts and/or behavior, anxiety and panic attacks, and loss of ability to feel pleasure.

How Can I Find Help For Someone Using Methamphetamine?

- All of Rhode Island’s licensed treatment programs are prepared to treat methamphetamine users. You can get a list of our programs at www.mhrh.ri.gov under “Behavioral Healthcare Programs and Services”
- Call the Rhode Island Council on Alcoholism and Other Drug Dependence’s 24 hour Helpline at 1-866-ALCDRUG (1-866-252-3784).

What is MHRH doing?

- Monitoring treatment admission trends and identifying areas of concern
- Educating prevention professionals and treatment providers
- Participating in state-wide, regional and national planning groups